PUBLIC HEARING – MANAGER'S STATEMENT
LAREDO, TEXAS
June 13, 2017

Regarding Proposed Listing for the Texas hornshell under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Manager's Statement

Good evening. My name is Adam Zerrenner. I am the Field Supervisor for the Austin Ecological Services Field Office for the Southwest Region of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Service representatives, including myself, are here this evening to receive comments on the August 10, 2016, proposal to list the Texas hornshell as endangered. The proposal is being made under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The Texas hornshell has been a candidate for listing under the ESA since 2001.

It is our intent that any final determination resulting from the proposal be as accurate and effective as possible, and towards that end, we seek the best scientific and commercial data available. We will base a final determination in part on comments received today as well as comments received online

and at our office through June 29, 2017, and comments received during our previous comment period in 2016.

We are proposing to list the Texas hornshell because it is presently in danger of extinction throughout its entire range, based on the immediacy, severity and scope of the threats from habitat loss. The Texas hornshell was once abundant throughout rivers in southern New Mexico and the Rio Grande basin in Texas and Mexico. The species has suffered a significant decline and now occupies only 15 percent of its historical U.S. range. The main threats to the species are river fragmentation and loss as a result of impoundments and reduced water quality and quantity.

The Texas hornshell is a freshwater mussel and can grow to more than 4½ inches long and live up to 20 years. In the Rio Grande, the Texas hornshell has been found downstream of Big Bend National Park and near Laredo in Webb County, Texas. In the Pecos River basin (the Black and Delaware Rivers), it is found in Eddy County, New Mexico, and near Pandale, Texas, and the Devil's River in Val Verde County, Texas. Historically, the Texas hornshell was widely distributed in Gulf Coast rivers in Mexico, however, its present status there is unclear.

We are working with Federal, State, NGO, and academic partners to, develop and implement conservation actions necessary for improving the status of the Texas hornshell and the rivers and streams it depends upon. Improving water quality and quantity will not only benefit the Texas hornshell but the surrounding communities as well.

The current public comment period for on the listing proposal closes on June 29, 2017. Our final listing determination must publish in the *Federal Register* no later than August 10, 2017.

Thank you for attending tonight's public hearing. I will now give the floor back to Jeff Humphrey who has a few words about the purpose of the hearing and some instructions about providing public comment.